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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ECOWAS](#) [NI](#)
SUBJECT: ECOWAS CONVENES 36TH SUMMIT IN ABUJA

REF: ABUJA 984

Classified By: Ambassador Robin R. Sanders for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (SBU) The Ambassador attended the opening session of the 36th ordinary meeting of the Heads of State (HoS) of ECOWAS. Nigerian President (and current ECOWAS Chairman) Umaru Musa Yar'Adua opened the session with a 15-minute speech on the issues which have been, and will continue to be, the focus of his leadership as Chairman. With an unusually strong voice, though a few of his usual coughing spells, the president cited his efforts to ensure that the ECOWAS Commission engaged in seeking to restore peace and security in the region, particularly in both Guineas. He highlighted Guinea Bissau's upcoming election on June 28, 2009 as an example of ECOWAS success and stated he would call for an international donors conference on Guinea Bissau in Abuja after their election. In addition, Yar'Adua also said he hoped to see elections later this year in Guinea Conakry and in Cote d'Ivoire.

¶2. (U) President Yar'Adua then turned his remarks to his heads of state (HoS) colleagues, calling for them to have more political will to implement the ECOWAS protocols and conventions on the free movement of goods and services, a common currency and the common tariff regimes. He noted that it had been 30 years since many of these protocols had been signed, but that many states continued to fail to meet the obligations contained in these protocols. He hoped that, during this period of a global financial crisis, member states would come together on these pressing issues in order to secure a better economic and development future for the people of the West African region. Yar'Adua also said that he wanted the Summit to develop a plan for projects that could tap into the \$100 million infrastructure fund recently announced at the G-20 Summit in London. Yar'Adua said the closed-door session with the assembled HoS's would also discuss improving peace and security in the region, reducing the number of coups, and improving economic development so that the lives of all the peoples of West Africa will be better.

¶3. (SBU) This meeting is another of the twice-yearly summits of ECOWAS HoS, and, in addition to security issues, will discuss expansion of the ECOWAS tariff regime, and common policies on mining. It is the first of three HoS-level meetings which ECOWAS will conduct on successive days; that

of June 23 will discuss moves to establish a West African Monetary zone. That of June 24 is to be a special summit between ECOWAS and the visiting Spanish Head of Government, Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero.

14. (C) Comment: Yar'Adua was certainly in better physical form than in Ambassador's last encounter with him, as his voice was certainly much stronger, he walked with a little more vigor, and he even joked during his initial opening remarks. Nonetheless, he still remains physically very frail. We know that he has dialysis at least two times per week, so it is possible that reftel meeting took place on one of the days of the treatment, leaving him in a pretty weak state. End comment.

15. (U) This cable was coordinated with Consulate Lagos.
SANDERS